



# SEDIBA NEWSLETTER

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## Welcome & General

Ed's Letter

Dear FOPS members

It has been a chaotic start to 2010 with no signs of a reprieve now that the world cup is upon us!

This Sediba is the first of the year it covers the goings on of Jan, Feb, March and April. Our committee members and their willing work party participants have been busy as usual getting things in ship shape. Happily we have had good turnouts, so thanks to all those that showed up for the work parties! We hope the enthusiasm will continue into the winter months. As we gear up for the winter freeze, we see a new face to the beautiful Pilanesberg, that, while drier than the summer months, offers a warmer respite from the cold in Jozi!

I would love to hear from anyone who has nice pics and/or interesting experiences or articles that we can publish in Sediba, please send them onto me at [sediba@fops.org.za](mailto:sediba@fops.org.za)

If you want to escape from the hoards arriving for the world cup, book a tent, there are apparently still some available, unfortunately as with everything else these days, costs have risen and the Committee have had no option but to increase FOPS Membership fees (\*please see note below). Fortunately it is still very affordable and we hope that we will have your continued support. New fees will apply for the 2010/2011 year. Fees/renewals are due end July 2010 for the 2010/2011 period.

So long for now

Enjoy this issue of Sediba

Regards

Jacqui Higgins

## Inside This Issue

Welcome & General	1
IMPORTANT Notice	1
Our Committee	2
New Members	2
Workparties	3 - 4
FOPS Geological sites	5 - 8

## \*IMPORTANT Notice to all members!

**NEW FEES:** R180 per family (with children under 18 years of age); R150 per individual membership.

Reminder: The tents are only available for use by FOPS members; bookings must be made telephonically. Please ensure that you have your membership number on hand when booking. To book please contact Lindy 082 890 00534

For membership to FOP's please apply online under the Member Zone tab; submit your application, then send proof of payment to [secretary@fops.org.za](mailto:secretary@fops.org.za) or fax 086 644 2477. If you need to contact Fiona (FOP's secretary) [secretary@fops.org.za](mailto:secretary@fops.org.za) or sms 079 517 4475 if you reach voicemail, please leave a message, with your name and telephone number and she will return your call at her earliest convenience. Please do not contact other Committee members instead, as this causes much confusion and doubling up of work.

For work party information you can download the dates off the website alternatively contact:

Pilanesberg Work Party Weekends – Paddy Coombe-Heath (011) 793 4867 or 082 459 4339

Borakalalo / Kgaswane Work Party Weekends - John Bennett (011) 615 3340 or fax (011) 880 2261 c/o Vicky Bennett

### A work of thanks

Sponsorship/Donation: thanks to G.Lehmkuhl for arranging the donation of tools from CT Buildit, Chris Taylor. The committee would like to extend our thanks, to all our members for their continued support and donations.

### A Friendly Reminder

When staying at the tents please could we ask you to be considerate not only of other guests but also of the tents and equipment. We have a special place in the bush that we would like to keep in good condition and as a haven for visitors.

**Interesting fact:** The park has in excess of 7 000 animals including 24 of the larger species

## Our Committee

Title	Name	Contact numbers	Email
Chairman	Errol Blecksley	082 920 9211	ebleksley@wol.co.za
Treasurer	Mark Viljoen	082 773 8855	mark@jvms.co.za
Special Projects – Pilansberg	Paddy Coombe-Heath	082 459 4339	lindys1@worldonline. co.za
Special Projects - Bo- rakalalo / Kgaswane:	John Bennett	011 615 3340	
Secretary (Member- ship renewals, appli- cations & queries)	Fiona Chapman	079 517 4475	secretary@fops.org.za
Sediba Editor	Jacqui Higgins	082 385 4444	Sediba@fops.org.za

## NEW MEMBERS

Thanks to all members for their membership renewals, also we would like to welcome new FOPS members, we hope you will enjoy being part of the FOPS family:

Allan van Heerden

Melvan le Roux & family

Hillary James

Margaret Slyper & family

Nico Nel (welcome back)

Koos Pretorius & family

# PILANSBERG WORKPARTIES

## March WorkParty – Borakalalo (Kevin Lesser)

Again we had a fine bunch of volunteers and two international guests from Germany (Udo and Peta). The morning started as usual with the early morning roll call by our resident two-legged rooster calling out – “let’s go”

Off to the hills we went to collect rocks (not Afrikaans folks) but piles and piles of the geological variety were hauled, tossed, thrown or chucked down the hills to the roadside. Stan our appointed tractor driver started loading and hauling the rocks down to the causeway in the wilderness area which we have been tackling over the past few months. With all the rocks now heading towards the causeway it was time to start mixing the cement.

Oops, the cement mixer wasn’t working (not too surprising) and was missing a part or two. Thanks to one of the new guys in the Borakalalo workshop crew (Donald), we stripped off the engine and with lots of mercy we managed to get the engine running again. We found a spare part here and there and then put the whole contraption together. With a cough and splatter, a tweak here and there we coaxed the machine into making several batches of cement. This cement was worked into the rocks to hold them into position. What a beautiful site we had whilst working on the bridge. Two of the resident rhino’s came to inspect the progress. See photos.

Needless to say, at the end of the day we all felt like we had a good gym workout. Legs and arms were all tired, but sitting around the fire and soaking in the conversation under the beautiful star filled sky is always soul enriching.

Thank you for all the hard work.



Picture one



Picture two



Picture three

### **April Work Party (Paddy)**

Hi Folks,

Well in spite of what the weather man predicted, which was rain, rain and more rain. This did not deter 37 people who dared to come to the work party. As it turned out there was no rain and we enjoyed a good Braai on Friday and Saturday evening. We even had 3 newbies, welcome to Hilary James, Brigitte and Rene Broich and Tony Newell, welcome and hope to see you again soon. The weather on Saturday was a scorcher but the guys did what they had to do, well done!

The projects were top of the Pops Batlhako parking area. This is coming along at a rapid rate, I said to Chalkie that maybe he should slow down a bit, because he is working us out of a job. But jokes aside we could finish up in about 3 to 4 Months.

Iron Age Site, looking good but still needs maintenance. By this I mean spraying and clearing of the dead stuff from last month. Touch wood no more fence breaches at the site. Talking of fences the 3 Giraffe are still in the E.E.Z. the attempt to move them back into the park failed.

Then 4 teams set out to do battle with the directions cairns, and 'G' sites (Geological sites) with all this rain the grass refuses to stop growing, so we must keep cutting. The one team found a forest of Lantana along Kgabo drive. Luckily most of the plants were small, but there were a couple of big mothers out there too. Then they found a small plantation of Syringa trees on Nare link so these were also removed. Then lastly Dave and Sylvia stayed in camp and Sylvia painted the table and Sticky cut the grass. The camp is looking quite respectable. Jorg repaired the drive way, he almost resurfaced the whole thing. I just hope the rain doesn't wash it all away.

Well that's all from me for April, until next month go well.

Regards,

Paddy.

### **May Work Party (Paddy)**

Hi folks,

Well it seems the cold weather is starting to frighten you guys already??? There were 26 people of which 2 were non residents. We also had 2 visitors who said they were going to join, they were John Buchanan and Lolita Robbertze.

With all the rain the grass is still alive and well and refusing to die down, so we have been busy with cutting and spraying all over the park. The main gate at Bosele was the first project we tackled on Friday, it looks a lot better now. The F.O.P.S. fairies are happy. Then on Saturday we attacked the Iron Age Site. The big thing was a fire break around the parking area, we don't want that burning again. They also sprayed inside all the Kraals and the walkway. The same applied to Potakwane, we needed a good fire break, which was done to perfection. This team then moved on to Makorwane parking area and started on a fire break there. Well done guys. Batlhako parking area is looking good, the guys have done the front fence already, so its taking shape nicely now. Then 2 teams went out to do direction cairns and clear some of the view spots at a couple of the dams. The main one was Tlou dams, where it was very overgrown.

Lets hope the weather down not deter too many people in future. From me until next time, go well.

Regards,

Paddy

# THE BABCOCK / FOPS GEOLOGICAL TOUR

## CHAPTER 6 - A WORLD FIRST - CONSTRUCTION AND WOES

Potokwane in the early days was unfenced and just before G site construction started, reports of sightings of elephant began doing the rounds; mostly lone young bulls. It was time for them to leave the wilderness area and explore.

The informative board poles and the concrete ingredients were delivered to the camp. We hadn't built the tool room yet and so the bags of cement were wrapped in black plastic and stored under a tree. This proved to be a bad idea.

The first concrete slab was thrown on Dithabaneng. It was in the right place, the park had corrected their placement error. John Keates, the designer of the Potokwane ablutions, had come up with a plinth design that we liked and we hit construction on the run. The physical effort put into this project by some of the workers was truly amazing. I was watching work fanaticism at play here. As a result of this "lets move" attitude ( which I must admit I encouraged wholeheartedly ) the G site project was completed very quickly. After a couple of the slabs had been thrown some workers started on the round plinths and before they were all done the polished rocks were being lifted into place but for some un-remembered reason we didn't erect any poles for the informative boards until all of the other project phases were done. I played a very small part in this construction bit. Apart from getting involved in the building of perhaps three of the slabs my main role was one of fetch and carry.



First slab -start



Beer celebration - first slab finished

Unfortunately, I cannot possibly credit by name, the many hard workers who assisted in this project, there were just too many of them and I honestly don't remember who many of them were.

Chris Lee – while all this activity was going on, was busy writing up the blurbs for the informative boards. He gave me the first drafts and can you believe this? old know nothing here turned them down, claiming that they were too difficult to understand. He patiently went back to the drawing board and simplified them even more. What he should have done was given me a smack across the ear and told me to get on with what I was good at - mixing concrete.

Chris must have spent a fortune of time and effort on this task and when he handed the modified drafts back to me I doled a few out to my geological tribe for comment and they were all returned with more or less the same praise - they're perfect. One can proceed with confidence when one has a come back like that.

Back to construction - there was a bit of an elitist air about working on the G site project and a lot of people really wanted a chance to get involved. One guy in particular did more than his fair share of nagging in this regard until finally I relented and gave him a plinth to build. Flushed with success he pitched up at camp after dark and proudly announced that he had completed the task! This aroused a certain amount of suspicion as this was very fast work indeed! We paid an inspection visit to see his handy work on Sunday morning and we had no choice but to kick his workmanship to pieces. The following month I gave him an "URGENT URGENT" job to do elsewhere and told him that a rhino had bashed his plinth to pieces and that I was going to send somebody else to repair the damage.

This was an easily believable lie as he and his crew had been warned, prior to setting out for the site, to watch out for rhino as the plinth slab was placed in the middle of a multi-spoored rhino highway. And, another plinth had actually been knocked over by a passing rhino. A thick turgid layer of cement was brushed onto the bottom of the plinth, it was lifted back into position and it stood for years.

In those days there was no Potokwane link road. Entrance to the camp was via a long meandering, atrocious farm road that hugged the base of the hill to the right of the camp; traversing this road led to the replacement of many many exhausts. The now open piece of land below Potokwane was heavily wooded all the way down to the main road that leads to Mankwe. Potokwane presented no visible signs to passing vehicles at all and being on your lonesome in home base could be a bit a spooky affair.

On one of my cement replenishment trips to Pliansberg I drove into Potokwane and was greeted by an unsettling scene. An elephant had discovered our stash of plastic wrapped cement and had had a field day demolishing it. A large area was snowed under with grey powder and the plastic and paper from our pockets of cement that had been ripped to shreds and strewn all over the place.

Elephant prank - sure! Maybe you're right. But this guy had also tried to stomp out of existence the cement that had landed in heaps on the ground. This incident took place a few days before my visit, as ridiculous as this may sound, the vibe that I picked from what I was looking at was one of extreme violence. And 'man on man' this gut feeling turned out to be, in the long run, spot on.

When we fitted the poles they came complete with shade cover. The park had sourced some thick reed from a nearby farm. These had dried out nicely at Potokwane and a crew had combed them, cut them to length and fitted them into a lathe frame which was attached to the poles (pic1). I later realised that this was a completely unsuitable feature but at the time of construction liked the idea and thought it added a nice touch to the G site. However it was impractical as they would've had to have been replaced every two or three years.



Picture one



Picture two



Picture three

But one group of Pilansberg denizens sorted this impracticality out chop chop and really went for these shade covers in a big way, showing their appreciation by having fun ripping them to pieces. The one in the picture (pic 3) was in position for two months before being discovered by some elephants and unfortunately the three shown being loaded onto my bakkie (pic 4) were also set up as targets before we realised that we had a problem here. The three stood proud for about a week before the demolishers moved in.



Difficult to see but there are 5 frames in pic 2. In fact, when we left the camp on sunday we had seven completed and they were laid out in a nice neat line ready to be erected first thing during the next workparty weekend. Well, that's what we planned.

One more construction chapter to go; till then - go well.

John Bennett

#### Side track

On one of my delivery runs to a site ( load - men and material ) we discovered an abandoned blue golf ( i think ) parked on the side of the road and the four "abandonees" ( new word ) were tottering across a large treeless stretch of grassland. They had 'made in england' stamped all over them. Beautiful, flowery loose flowing cottony dresses. Thin straps across tanned bony shoulders – they were all well past middle age – and all 4 were wearing various sized straw hats. These hats were bedecked with gardens of multi coloured material flowers around the rims. They presented what i would regard as a perfect picture of an english summer country garden setting with four village ladies on their way from a church service to tea in the grounds.

It was such an unexpected and surreal scene that it took quite a while for it to penetrate my thick skull that this easy on the eye foursome were blithly and carelessly wandering into serious trouble. The target of their illegal meandering was a group of rhino that consisted of a very very large bull who was strutting his stuff --- stomping his feet, waving his horn around and grunting and snorting like crazy ,trying to make it as difficult as possible for the objects of his unbridled passion ( two females with two fairly young calves ) to leave his territory.

With an assortment of bino's; cameras and books in hand the four tourists were gaily trotting down to their collective doom. Very politely, i asked them to please return to their car, pointing out that they were asking for trouble. The lady in the front, with the biggest floppiest hat, looked at me over her shoulder and said, " young man ( my kind of woman ) we are from kenya and we know how to deal with rhino."

The bull had by now noticed the intruders and had widened the range of his stomp about to include them in his passion dance. I became extremely frightened for these stupid women and for a brief moment considered driving my bakkie between them and the rhinos. But that was impossible. My vehicle was so overloaded i was having trouble keeping a straight line on the road. Driving across the veldt i would have got stuck immediately. Once again i implored them to please get back to their car. Was ignored - lost my cool - aggressively demanded that they return to their vehicle immediately or i would go down and drag them back to their car. The big floppy hatted one told me to ' f --- off ' and the fight was on. I lost it completely. The foul language that flew back and forth between me and big hat was awesome. But it did the trick. One of the other ladies panicked and said that she thought they had better listen to me and when she turned around to leave the scene she stumbled and almost fell. That was the catalyst. They almost ran back to their car, slamming the doors so hard that it looked like it was going to tip over. Then with wheel spin, showering my bakkie with sand and stone, they careened off down the road.

We continued our slow crawl to site, bawdily and raunchily trying to fathom out just what those women were intending to do when they reached the rhino. Were they going to assist the bull attain his obvious goals or were they going to stand shoulder to shoulder with the same sex and drive the hapless suitor away. We'll never know.

I've also often wondered just what my co-workers would have done and thought had I been able to drive my vehicle between rhino and tourists, thereby putting them directly in the line of fire as it were. I'll never know that either. Mind you I suppose I do. They would have most probably abandoned ship as soon as my intentions became clear.

Guest comment:

"I had a fantastic weekend in the FoPS tents over the Easter weekend. And great sightings of leopard; cheetah; lion and 7 separate jackal sightings... plus saw a herd of Eland again for the first time in two years.... but still no buffalo sightings!"

A Nice Discovery...

It's not often in today's world that we are given the opportunity to experience the power of nature, its healing spirit and its overwhelming magic. Touch The Earth offers you the unique opportunity to walk, sleep and eat in the middle of the bush, to listen to the night sounds before you fall asleep under the stars, to refresh your spirit and return with a better understanding of our natural environment. Touch The Earth offers a true wilderness experience where trailists are completely in the wild in campsites with no infrastructure only the canopy of a tree and starry sky for your roof. Prospective trailists must be aware that they will be walking and sleeping in areas where animals such as lion, elephant and rhino roam freely and camp sites used for the true wilderness trail experience are not protected by the safety of a fence! Participants will have none of the daily luxuries such as toilets, fridges, roofs and showers. This process provides a better awareness of wilderness. There is something very humbling about sitting in the wild, unprotected by fences and walls, under a vast canopy of stars listening to the calls of the night. For more information contact Sharon Myhill 082 490 2032.

Have your say...

Pet trade - on a recent visit to the Monkey sanctuary situated near the Hartbeespoort dam, where the monkeys and lemurs (62 in total) are now being rehabilitated into the wild, from once being pets. I was struck by the detrimental effect the pet trade has on 'non-domesticated' / wild animals. Disturbingly I have seen Chinchilla's in two pet shops in Jhb the latest 'trendy' pet, the pet shops say these animals are bred in captivity, however I am a bit doubtful.

Please spread the word to friends and family to ponder these questions before buying pets:

- Are they indigenous?
- What are the characteristics of these animals e.g. diurnal/nocturnal?
- Find out exactly where the animal has been and where it came from.
- Ask yourself if the animal will suit you and your lifestyle.
- Are you able to cope with the demands of the pet e.g. Environment, food, attention